

Why Christians Shouldn't Sue Christians - 1 Corinthians 6:1-8 – November 23rd, 2014

- Today's teaching is titled, "Why Christians Shouldn't Sue Christians," or if you prefer why Christians shouldn't take other Christians to court.
- The Apostle Paul will deal with some nuts and bolts issues if I can say it that way, concerning the carnal behavior of the Corinthian church.
- It seems that not only were they tolerating unrepentant sexual sin in this church, but they were also suing other Christians in this church.

As one commentator so aptly noted concerning this, "Not only did the Corinthian believers have a problem with moral looseness, but they were filing meaningless lawsuits."

- I know we've tried to imagine what it would've been like to attend this church in Corinth, but how awkward would it be if you're being sued.
- Imagine you're there on a Sunday morning and you're sitting in your usual seat, assuming of course that nobody got there first and took it.
- As you begin worshipping you glance over your shoulder only to see that professing Christian that's taking you to court over a legal dispute.

- If this weren't bad enough, you brought a non-Christian friend with you who knows all about the lawsuit and they see him sitting there too.
- Then, they whisper to you asking if that's the guy that's suing you. You tell them it is, and they say to you, and he calls himself a Christian.
- Just as you're about to answer them, the pastor announces that the title of today's sermon will be Why Christians Shouldn't Sue Christians.

1. Non-Christians become our judges (Verse 1)

- 1 If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people?
- v1 Paul says if anyone has a legal dispute with another how dare they take it before non-Christians instead of Christians to judge the case.
 - He says instead they ought to settle the dispute amongst themselves as the Lord's people in that the non-Christians shouldn't be the judge.
 - I can't get over how strong Paul is when he, in effect, says to them, "how dare you do this." It's as if Paul is saying don't you dare do this.

- In other words, the message it sends is that Christians don't have any answers, and as such, they have to go to the world for the answers.
- Instead of Christians going to non-Christians to solve their problems, the non-Christians should go to the Christians to solve their problems.
- Sadly, these Christians in that Corinthian church were doing just that, and as such, they were allowing the world to judge their legal cases.

- Be that as it may, it's important to understand that this does not mean that we as Christians cannot exercise our legal rights as US citizens.
- It also doesn't mean that we are prohibited from taking non-Christians to court over a legal dispute so as to have it settled in a lawful way.
- Personally, I am so thankful that I have never been sued, nor have I ever sued, and I have no intentions of that every happening yet future.

As for the matter of Christians suing non-Christians, one commentator said it best this way, "Does this mean that it is permissible for Christians to sue non-believers who wrong them? This is an important question in our age where people are so ready to sue. Paul certainly does not bring up this specific issue, and he does not say matters between Christians should be unresolved—only that they should be settled in the proper arena.

Adam Clarke offers some additional insight as it relates to Christians suing other Christians writing, "Those in a religious community who *will not* submit to a proper arbitration, made by persons among themselves, should be expelled from the Church of God."

2. It will mar our Christian witness (Verses 2-4)

2 Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! 4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church?

- v2 Paul asks don't they know that God's people will judge the world, and if we judge the world are we not competent to judge trivial cases.
- v3 He then goes onto ask a second question, saying, don't you know you will judge fallen angels then, how much more the things of this life.
- v4 He asks them, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church.

G. Campbell Morgan captures the grand and glorious notion of Christian's judging the angels when he writes, "How great is God's destiny for redeemed men and women! "Is there any statement in the apostolic writings in certain senses which has more definite and tremendous implication of the union of the saints with their Lord?"

- What Paul is saying here is that Christians suing Christians mars our Christian witness to a world that is watching how we treat each other.
- We do err greatly when we underestimate how that the world will make decisions about Jesus Christ, based on our behavior as Christians.
- This begs the question of why God would make Himself so vulnerable, as it were, by wrapping His reputation in the conduct of His people.

- I believe that God in His sovereignty has ordained it to be this way and it's for this very reason that maintaining a witness is so very serious.
- However, this does not excuse non-Christians when it comes to the day they give an account to God such that, this is their only excuse.
- By that I mean I'm not a Christian because of Christians. The problem with that is, for every bad witness, there are many more good ones.

3. It brings shame and defeat (Verses 5-8)

5 I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? 6 But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers! 7 The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? 8 Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters.

- v5 Paul is saying all of this to shame them asking is it possible that there's nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between you.
- v6-7 One brother takes another to court in front of unbelievers and the fact they do this means they've been completely defeated already.
- v7-8 He says why not rather be wronged and cheated instead you yourselves cheat and do wrong and it's done to your brothers and sisters.

I'll close with a quote from one of my favorite writers, Oswald Chambers who said that it's not have you been defrauded, it's have you defrauded. In other words, instead of one asking themselves if they have been wronged, they should ask themselves, have they wronged.